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cc FCO

10 DOWNING STREET

THE PRIME MINISTER

24 December 1980

Thank you for your letter of 11 December.

I share your concern over the expulsion of the Mayors of Hebron and Halhul. We have made our own concern very clear to the Government of Israel at ministerial level and the European Community is also making a joint demarche in Tel Aviv.

The expulsions and other recent events on the West Bank underline the need for a comprehensive settlement in the Middle East. As you will have seen from the statement issued at the Luxembourg meeting of the European Council on 2 December, we are determined to step up our activity and to continue to work for a settlement. Over the next few months, the European Community will be working hard to seek the widest possible acceptance of the principles of the Venice Declaration. This will require a spirit of compromise from Israel. But progress will also depend on the willingness of the Arab side, including the Palestinians, to express their agreement to negotiate a just and permanent solution with Israel.

I believe that 1981 will offer an opportunity, perhaps through the Euro-Arab Dialogue, for the Arab side to take this historic step towards peace.

I know that the Presidency of the European Community and Lord Carrington will wish to keep in close touch with you throughout 1981. Let us hope that the New Year will be truly a year of peace in the Middle East.

(Sgd) Margaret Thatcher

His Excellency Monsieur Chedli Klibi

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